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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 000314

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SUBJECT: TIBET TALKS: NO PROGRESS

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Classified By: Political Minister Counselor
Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials blamed the Dalai Lama's personal representatives for the lack of progress in the January 30-31 talks, saying the Tibetan side was unwilling to compromise on its Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy. CCP United Front Work Department (UFWD) Executive Vice Minister Zhu Weiqun told the media February 2 that the talks had improved the Tibetan side's understanding of CCP policies and noted that the Dalai Lama's envoys appeared open to continuing discussions. Tibetan blogger Woesser criticized the increasing "arrogance" of PRC negotiators and said the UFWD deliberately insulted the Tibetan side by taking the envoys on a tour of Mao Zedong's birthplace in Hunan province. A Tibetan academic at a UFWD-affiliated think tank said the ambitious Tibetan memorandum had become a new obstacle to progress; he expressed hope the Tibetan side would narrow its agenda to less controversial cultural, educational and environmental topics. This contact noted that Lodi Gyari's "conciliatory" remarks upon returning to India left him thinking the dialogue would continue. China's media did not give prominent coverage to the talks, instead focusing on the Taiwan arms sales story and news of President Obama's pending meeting with the Dalai Lama. Mainland-based bloggers, meanwhile, expressed support for the CCP's hard line on the Tibet issue. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Dalai Lama's personal representatives, Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen, arrived in China January 26 for a round of dialogue with representatives of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Work Department (UFWD), the 9th such meeting since negotiations resumed in 2002. Before the formal talks, UFWD officials took the two Tibetan envoys on a tour of the birthplace of Mao Zedong in Shaoshan, Hunan province. While in Hunan, the representatives also toured an ethnic Miao autonomous prefecture. Over the weekend, Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen met with UFWD Minister Du Qinglin and held a day of talks with UFWD Executive Vice Minister Zhu Weiqun.

¶3. (SBU) On February 2, two days after the departure of the Tibetan representatives, Zhu Weiqun held a press conference in which he blamed the Tibetan side for any lack of progress. Repeating much of the language he used during his press conference following the November 2008 dialogue round, Zhu rejected the Tibetan side's "Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People," saying the Dalai Lama's representatives had refused to "revise a

single word" or make concessions. Zhu again framed the talks as being only about the personal future of the Dalai Lama and rejected the notion that the Dalai Lama represented the interests of the Tibetan people.

¶4. (U) Nevertheless, Zhu said the latest round had achieved "results" (cheng xiao) by giving the Tibetan representatives the chance to better comprehend CCP policies and had "allowed the Dalai Lama to understand the kind of position he is in." Zhu also commented how, in November 2008, Lodi Gyari had been "very unhappy" with the rejection of the Memorandum and had indicated the Tibetan side might cut off talks. This time, Zhu said, the Tibetans had shown a "better attitude" and Gyari had indicated a willingness to continue the dialogue.

¶5. (U) In the same press conference, Zhu warned of serious damage to U.S.-China relations should U.S. leaders meet with the Dalai Lama. He also leveled direct criticism of the Dalai Lama himself, saying the Tibetan spiritual leaders should "clarify" comments made in recent speeches that he was a "son of India."

China "More Patronizing This Time"

¶6. (C) Tibetan blogger Woese told PolOff February 4 that CCP authorities had shown greater arrogance toward the Dalai Lama's representatives during this latest dialogue round. Taking Lodi Gyari and

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Kelsang Gyaltsen to Mao Zedong's birthplace was insulting and meant to send a clear "political signal" of China's uncompromising position. Woese's husband, dissident author Wang Lixiong, noted that during past interactions, China had allowed Lodi Gyari to visit Tibetan areas, which showed "at least some sincerity" on the Chinese side. Woese said that this latest round did not seem at all like a negotiation, but rather was portrayed by the CCP "as an opportunity for the Tibetan representatives to receive political education, conduct self-criticism, and recognize their mistakes." Woese objected specifically to Zhu Weiqun's patronizing and dismissive language, particularly his public references to the Tibetan delegation as "Gyari and company" (Jia Ri na xie ren).

¶7. (C) A final slap at the Dalai Lama, Woese said, was the appointment February 3 of Gyaincain Norbu, the government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, to be vice president of the state-run Buddhist Association of China. The move, made so soon after Lodi Gyari's departure, was meant to show the CCP's intention to continue its tight control over Tibetan Buddhism. Wang speculated that the Dalai Lama was willing to endure the humiliating treatment of his envoys in hopes that the situation would improve once Vice President Xi Jinping took over from Hu Jintao in ¶2012. Wang said the Dalai Lama still had great affection for Xi's late father, former State Councilor Xi Zhongxun, and continued to cherish a watch the elder Xi gave him in the 1950s.

"Deep Lack of Trust"

¶8. (C) Tanzen Lhundup (Danzeng Lunzhu), Vice Director of the Institute for Sociology and Economics at the Chinese Center for Tibetan Studies, a UFWO-affiliated think tank, told PolOff February 5 that the Dalai Lama remained deeply mistrusted by

the CCP and this lack of trust was the main reason the dialogue had produced few results. Anger lingered within China's leadership over the botched recognition of the Panchen Lama in 1995, when, in China's view, the Dalai Lama preemptively named his own candidate. More personally, senior leaders continued to feel a "loss of face" when met by Tibetan demonstrators during official trips abroad, and this hardened attitudes against compromise. Finally, Tanzen Lhundup said the Tibetans' Memorandum of Genuine Autonomy had become "a new obstacle" and the document was an example of "poor negotiating tactics" on the part of the Tibetan exiles. The Memorandum was simply "too big" and covered too many contentious political issues. Tanzen Lhundup said progress might be possible in future rounds if the Tibetans focused on more narrow areas such as culture, education and the environment.

¶9. (C) Though he put most of the blame for the dialogue's lack of progress on the Tibetan side, Tanzen Lhundup also said CCP leaders should change their traditionally negative attitude toward religion, which colored their approach to the Dalai Lama. Such a change in official thinking would help create a better atmosphere for talks.

¶10. (C) Tanzen Lhundup praised the statement made by Lodi Gyari in Dharamsala following the dialogue. In the statement, Gyari referred to a "seven point" note that the envoys had presented to the UFWD. The note, Gyari said, addressed Chinese concerns regarding sovereignty and offered the Dalai Lama's "cooperation for a mutually beneficial solution." This language, Tanzen Lhundup said, indicated sensitivity to Chinese concerns and left him believing that dialogue would continue, even if major progress would remain elusive.

Talks Receive Modest Press Coverage

¶11. (SBU) Mainland Chinese press coverage of the talks was light compared to coverage of the previous round in November 2008, and news of the dialogue itself was largely overshadowed by stories related to Taiwan arms sales and President Obama's expected meeting with the Dalai Lama. Chinese newspapers

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mainly ran short Xinhua News Agency releases of Zhu's February 2 press conference. The Beijing News (Xinjing Bao), for example, devoted only a single column to the UFWD press conference on page 6 of its February 3 edition. Even official websites devoted to Tibet news, such as www.chinatibetnews.com, appeared to play down the talks, devoting more space to the Communist Party's 5th Work Conference on Tibet, even though the conference had concluded January 20. The Global Times (Huanqiu Shibao), a commercial newspaper published by the CCP flagship People's Daily and known for its nationalistic editorial bent, gave front-page treatment to Zhu's remarks February 3 but focused mostly on his warnings about President Obama's upcoming meeting with the Dalai Lama.

Bloggers Echo Government Line

¶12. (C) Like their mainstream media counterparts, bloggers devoted less attention to the dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives than they did to the Taiwan arms sales announcement. Blog entries that did mention the talks largely echoed Zhu

Weiqun's comments. (Note: Tibet is one of the most closely censored topics on the Internet, and articles offering balanced views are quickly taken down by government censors and/or the blog-hosting services themselves.) One blogger, based in Liaoning province and using Baidu's blog service, said he was both "happy and heart sore" to see the talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives resume because the memories of the March 14 (2008) riots were still so raw. The Dalai Lama's "request" to the central government to restart dialogue shows that he "wants to return to the motherland before he dies" and that he "already has no capital to bargain with." Many bloggers mimicked Zhu Weiqun's criticism of the Dalai Lama's "son of India" remark. The statement, said blogger "Orchid Mountain Nightingale," showed that the Dalai Lama "does not consider himself Chinese...Just stay in India then!" Blogger "Shang Daijun" wrote that the Dalai Lama is "actually the son of the Indian government" since Indian authorities "provide food, drink and money" to the Tibetan exile government.

HUNTSMAN